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NEW DELHI, June 18, 2013 - The government of India and the World Bank today signed a \$255 million credit agreement to support the National AIDS Control Support Project to help accelerate AIDS prevention programs by targeting vulnerable groups at high risk of infection. This is the fourth of a series of credits aimed at supporting India's AIDS control program which seeks to continue its successful implementation to curb the spread of HIV by 2017. So far the World Bank has provided a total of \$525 million under the last three projects. The new project will support the government of India's National AIDS Control Program IV (NACP IV- 2012-2017) that focuses on prevention, behavior change communications and institutional strengthening. NACP IV will build on the successful experience of NACP III (2007-2012), which was focused on prevention programs, complemented by care, support, and treatment of people living with HIV and AIDS. The rate of new HIV infections fell by nearly 10 percent during the National AIDS Control Project III (NACP III). India has made impressive progress and is on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halting and reversing the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The progress in preventing has been impressive with about 57 percent decline in new cases but variable in states, ranging from some states where HIV prevalence trends are leveling off or declining, to some states showing increasing vulnerabilities and increasing prevalence which were hitherto supposed to be low prevalence, thus facing emerging epidemics among high risk groups that needs to be addressed said Nilaya Mitash, Joint Secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India. "This project, we hope, will reduce new HIV infections by expanding the reach and coverage to those who are at high risk and high vulnerability over the next five years, he added. The agreement for the National AIDS Control Support Project was signed by Nilaya Mitash, Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of the Government of India; Aradhana Johri, Additional Secretary, Department of AIDS Control, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; and Onno Ruhl, Country Director, World Bank, India on behalf of the World Bank. The Indian HIV epidemic scenario is characterized by concentrated epidemics among the high risk groups. It is a highly diverse and heterogeneous epidemic scenario, driven by sex work, unprotected sex among men who have sex with men, and injecting drug use. India is fortunate in having successfully safeguarded 99 percent of its population from HIV but the low prevalence rate should not lull us into complacency. Without strongly sustained prevention programs among those at highest risk, the gains made in the fight against this epidemic could yet be lost, said Onno Ruhl, World Bank Country Director for India. "HIV and AIDS also have an enormous disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups and on poor households with less access to information, preventive services and treatment. he added. Although the prevalence rate in India is low (up to 0.5%), there are varying trends within and between states, which require scaling up of targeted interventions among vulnerable groups at high risk for HIV infection. "By scaling up targeted interventions and prevention services, it is estimated that the project will cover about 90 percent of the high risk groups and avert about three million new infections by 2017, said Sameh El-Saharty, Senior Health Policy Specialist, World Bank and the Projects Team Leader. "The project will support NACP IV to further strengthen the institutional capacity of NACO and continue to innovate across different components of the program, he added. The project will support the Department of AIDS Control and the National AIDS Control Organization in undertaking prevention programs as well as expand communication and advocacy programs that promote safe behavior and discourage stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS. The project will be financed by a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) - the World Bank's concessional lending arm - which provides interest-free loans with 25 years to maturity and a grace period of five years. Media Contacts
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